

Introduction

Language development in early childhood is an essential part of a child's life. It allows a child to communicate, express feelings, learn, think and build a relationship. Learning, understanding, enjoying and using language is the first step in literacy and forms the basis of reading and writing. Developing oral language skills allows children to read and write. Reading and sharing books will allow a child to develop and expand his vocabulary, promote bonding, provide him with a sense of safety and improve communication skills (Raising Children, 2022). Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of entertainment and communication in every culture worldwide. It is a way of recording and transferring historical events from generation to generation. Nowadays, storytelling is a convenient and affordable option that covers oracy, language and literacy in many educational contexts. Research shows that good storytelling helps engagement and understanding, promotes imagination so a listener can visualize the concept and provides the children with a sense of belonging essential for good classroom pedagogy. The effects of Covid 19 were tragic and restrictive people were stuck in their houses. Educational storytelling has taken a new dimension from face-to-face to virtual environments. World storytelling institutes have organized different virtual workshops to improve the storytelling skills of educators and to accommodate the needs of young learners (Perseverance, Performance and Pedagogy in the Pandemic, 2020).

Benefits of Storytelling

The art of storytelling is as old as ancient times, a long-standing tradition not to be confused with book reading. There are varying styles of storytelling like reading from a book, memorizing the story or characters, and watching or listening on an electronic device. Stories develop a strong emotional connection with a listener, takes him in a trans-like state improve engagement and imagination in young children. The research shows that storytelling allows children to become good listeners, and good readers, building vocabulary and having countless literacy benefits. According to researchers, there are several benefits of storytelling in children and adults including engagement,

imagination, control, understanding of the world, building community, enhancing memory, support early literacy and development. During storytelling, children create a picture of the story in their minds. Agosto conducted research in a school setting by telling two different stories and children were asked to draw images and write words related to the story. The study showed that storytelling had a positive impact on visualization, cognitive engagement, critical thinking and sequencing. These skills are bound to improve the literacy skills of a child including language development in young children (Agosto, 2016).

According to Ericson's theory of psychosocial development, a child from infancy to adulthood passes through eight different psychosocial stages. Each stage could have a positive or negative impact on his personality development. During the first two years, a child earns trust and develops bonds with the primary caregivers. From two until the age of four years, a child begins to express feelings. If he is supported in a positive way this could have a lifelong effect on personality development. Reading a story to a young child will allow him to explore and understand the world, equip him with new words, and a close bonding time with his mother to give him a sense of security and comfort. Bowlby's Attachment Theory the need to have a secure attachment in the early years of a child's life. With the help of a secure attachment, the child is eager to explore and learn (Bates, 2019). Both developmental theories emphasize the importance of trust and building relationships during the early stages of a child's life. Similarly, storytelling allows children a fun, safe and secure environment essential to develop healthy relationships and enhances the learning abilities of a child.

The story narrated in the first video is named 'There was an old lady who swallowed a fly. It is a rhyming story read to children three to four years old. A rhyming story is a simple story that rhymes, allows the children to understand the rhyming word by repetition that supports the development of memory, and improves listening and speaking skills. The rhyming stories are short and quick, can be read any time of the day and can be easily incorporated into the daily learning routine. It is a creative way of improving early literacy and allowing children to take an interest in rhythm and patterns.

Repetitive phrases and words are easy to remember and to enhance phonological awareness children need to be exposed to simple spoken language. Not only do rhymes act as a vocabulary booster but they also help in a child's physical development, balance, coordination, and fine and gross motor skills by encouraging children to perform actions on the songs. Rhymes also support the numeracy and literacy aspects of early years education by counting objects in the story like in this scenario counting animals that the old lady ate. The use of prompts in the story not only supports visual interest, attention and engagement but also improves language and communication skills. According to Dervla Hayes, a speech-language therapist wrote in the article use of gestural, visual or physical prompts allows the child to imitate. Prompting is a strategy which allows children to make correct choices and have a better learning experience. Research shows that prompting is an effective intervention for children with additional learning needs (Hayes, 2021). Physical gestures allow the children to express themselves and open opportunities for role play like dressing up as an old lady. The Early Years Curriculum of Wales recognizes the uniqueness of every child and focuses on meaningful play-based learning opportunities. The art of storytelling supports the five developmental pathways of belonging, exploration, communication, well-being and physical development that align with the New Early Years Curriculum of Wales (Early years Wales, 2022).

Language Development and Early literacy from pre-Birth to seven years

Language development is an important part of a child's life closely monitored by professionals. After six months of gestation, an unborn child can hear the sounds outside the mother's body. Hearing comforting sounds will familiarize the child with certain sounds after birth. According to the Welsh Government, the stages of speech and language development provide a clear picture of a child's oracy. A child from zero to three months old can recognize his parents' voices and make vocal sounds like cooing. Between the age of three to six months, a child moves their head towards the sound and begins babbling and smiling. At the age of six to 12 months, he recognizes his name, imitates the first word and enjoys rhymes. Between 12 to 18 months starts to

respond to simple instruction and use at least 20 single words and plays alone. From 18 months to two years, improved focus and began to use basic two or three words sentences. A two to three years old child begins to use descriptive language and is interested in playing with others. At the age of three or four, a child understands the concept of taking turns, imitates conversation with curiosity at its peak, and enjoys listening to stories and playing with other children. When a child reaches the age of four to five uses long complex sentences, understands others' points of view, maintains conversation and laughs at jokes (Welsh Government, 2015).

Technology is shaping education and stores a wealth of resources for both teachers and learners. Classes have become more student-centered catering to the needs of every child. The second story presented in the video is named 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff'. The story is via digital content showing visual prompts and expressive language. Using a wide variety of words, asking questions and interacting with children improves language and communication skills. Nowadays, technology has become a part of our life and children are being too exposed to technology from a very early age at home and in educational settings. Technology provides meaningful experiences in a classroom environment and has a major impact on the early development of a child including early literacy and oracy. Technology allows exposure to a wide range of resources and improves children's social and emotional development. A recent study by Werling conducted in an early year's classroom showed that while using technological devices children engage in cooperative play by sharing materials, taking turns, communicating and interacting with each other. Solving simple puzzles in collaboration with each other. Induces child-directed learning that improves critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Another aspect of using technology is improved motor skills and a sensory experience for young children by using touch screens. From the use of technology, children are exposed to a wide range of vocabulary, music and rhymes that improve memory skills that promote early literacy and numeracy. Technology also has a tremendous impact on mathematical development. Children struggling with numeracy skills perform better with digital mathematical games makes learning exciting. (Werling, 2020).

In the New Curriculum of Wales, the Oracy comes under the umbrella of language, literacy and communication focusing on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Develop children into healthy confident individuals allowing them to become valued members of society by promoting effective language and communication skills (Welsh Government, 2022). Oracy is defined as listening and speaking skills, the ability to express oneself. It has a similar importance as literacy which includes reading and writing. One cannot deny the importance of communication skills, a child who struggles to communicate at the age of five is twice likely to have mental health difficulties at the age of 34. It is a statutory requirement to teach all the aspects of Oracy. Including social interaction like taking a turn, nonverbal cues like pronunciation, intonations also everyday listening and speaking skills (Lodge, 2020)

Bruner emphasized a child-centred approach. He suggested that the role of a practitioner is to facilitate learning by encouraging children's curiosity, imagination and exploration. Similarly, Bandura also believed that a child's learning is exclusive to a child's perceives the information from his surroundings. It is called social learning. He suggested that children learn through positive and negative experiences via role modelling. Jean Piaget, a cognitive theorist proposed that people's knowledge is based on their experiences which are influenced by their social, physical and emotional stages of development. All these theories relate to the importance of storytelling. Stories are an important part of a child's life. With stories, a child creates his own world. Stories with expressions, prompts, gestures and changes in voice tone provide a child with a rich imaginative learning environment unique to a child. Every child perceives information according to his understanding and experiences promoting a child-centred approach which proves the theory of Bruner, Bandura and Piaget (Bates, 2021).

Conclusion

The storytelling approach used in this piece of work is traditional style storytelling from a book with visual prompts, dressing up and role modelling. However, the second approach was based on digital technology with a computer using gestures, repetition,

pronouncing and repeating words. Storytelling not only brings a language learning experience, but it also promotes literacy and numeracy skills of a child by simple repetition of words, use of gestures, fidgety body movements and facial expressions promoting the physical, emotional and cognitive development of a child. Various child development theorists Like Piaget, Bruner, Bandura, Ericson and Bowlby emphasize the importance of storytelling in early years education. In comparison to traditional ways of storytelling, the digital approach of narrating a story also has similar benefits on literacy, numeracy and language development.

Reference List

Adams, P. (2021) *There was an old lady who swallowed a fly*. China: Child's Play (International) Ltd

Agosto, D. (2016) *Why Storytelling Matters Unveiling the Literacy Benefits of Storytelling*. Available at: <https://journals.ala.org/index.php/cal/article/viewFile/5990/7634> (Accessed: 28/10/2022)

Australian Government (2021) *Language Development in Children: 0-8 years*. Available at: <https://raisingchildren.net.au/babies/development/language-development/language-development-0-8> (Accessed: 29/10/2022)

Bates, b. (2019) *Learning Theories Simplified*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE

Bennet, C. (2019) *Importance of Nursery Rhymes in Early Childhood*. Available at: <https://www.pacey.org.uk/news-and-views/pacey-blog/2019/october-2019/the-importance-of-nursery-rhymes-in-early-childhood/#:~:text=Nursery%20rhymes%20provide%20bite-sized,rhythm%20and%20patterns%20of%20language> (Accessed:29/10/2022)

Bushby, A. (2017) *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. China: Lady Bird Picture Books

Hayes, D. (2014) *The Use of Prompting as an Evidence-based Strategy to Support Children with ASD in School Settings in New Zealand*. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1025644.pdf> (Accessed: 30/10/2022)

Lodge, L. (2020) SILENCE IS NOT GOLDEN: THE IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING ORACY. Available at: <https://www.oneeducation.co.uk/news-blog/silence-is-not-golden-the-importance-of-improving-oracy/#:~:text=By%20Laura%20Lodge%20on%2006%20May%202020%20We%E2%80%99re,confidence%2C%20too%20many%20children%20are%20locked%20in%20semi-silence> (Accessed: 30/10/2022)

Mages, W. (2020) '*Perseverance, Performance, and Pedagogy in the Pandemic*', *The Power of Storytelling in Face-to-Face and Virtual Learning Environments*, pp. 1-3. Available at:

https://moodle.uwtsd.ac.uk/pluginfile.php/517439/mod_resource/content/1/Perseverance%2C%20Performance%20and%20Pedagogy%20in%20the%20Pandemic.pdf?redirect=1 (Accessed 30/10/2022)

Welsh Government (2022). *Languages, Literacy and Communication*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/languages-literacy-and-communication/> (Accessed: 30/10/2022)

Werling, K. (2020) *The Effects of Technology in Early Childhood*. Available at: https://nwcommons.nwciowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1248&context=education_masters (Accessed: 30/10/2022)

Welsh Government (2015) *Stages of Speech and Language Development*. Available at: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/inline-documents/2019-05/stages-speech-and-language-en.pdf> (Accessed: 30/10/2022)

Welsh Government (2022) *A Curriculum for Funded Non-Maintained Nursery Settings*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales/api/storage/b1801d78-38c3-4320-9818-d9996c21aef8/220914-a-curriculum-for-funded-non-maintained-nursery-settings.pdf> (Accessed: 29/10/2022)